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# The Yucky Stuff

We know the story. When we read through John 13-17, we can feel the transition happening. Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for what is before them. He tells them repeatedly that he is going away and they can't come. They are totally confused. Their mission has been to follow Jesus; that was his first words to most of them, "Follow me". And now, what is this he is saying? They can't follow anymore?

In the midst of all his instructions, Jesus begins to tell them about his new commandment. "Love one another."

They don't even really hear it at this point. They don't seem to even respond to this new word from Jesus. They keep asking about what Jesus means about leaving them. Peter says, "Lord, why can't I follow you now?"

Jesus cares about their hearts and responds to their distress by telling them not to be worried. And he continues to bring up this love thing. Over and over. "You gotta love each other; this is how people will know you are mine."

Why do you suppose that love would be challenging for them in the days ahead? They were about to be thrust into a storm such as they'd never seen before. Accusations would escalate. Tempers would flair. Fear would tear their hearts apart. They would watch Jesus be taken from them and crucified.

Although we would all hope that rough times would bring out the best of us, sometimes it does just the opposite. It brings out the weakest parts just as was about to happen to the disciples. But Jesus kept hammering the nail into the truth of love.

"If you will love one another, you won't lose your way. You won't lose the focus of what I have called you to. I have been and am about to become your greatest example of love. I COMMAND you to love one another."

Sometimes as we choose to enter into a fast, all the yucky stuff comes up out of our hearts. We become short tempered (especially those who are fasting their coffee!) All of our weakest parts get together and have a party. I might call it spiritual dredging. God allows the Holy Spirit to dredge up stuff that needs to be dealt with. So what are we to do? Give up the fast? No, we are to remember that God is perfecting our ability to love. When those struggles jump up out of what we thought were their graves, we humbly present them again to the Father and ask for His help. And we must remember that our journey is never just about us. It is about each other. It is a relational journey. It is never just about we as individuals making it through life; it is about us LOVING each other through life.

Hmmm, seems like Jesus said something about that. "A new commandment I give you; Love one another. This is the way all men will be able to identify you as my disciples. And if I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself."

*Mikki*

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